

# Independent

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ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif chairing a meeting to review the progress of the Neelum-Jhelum Hydropower project at the PM House

## Govt blames PTI regime for criminal negligence on Neelum-Jhelum power project

**Criminal negligence committed by not conducting 3rd-party validation: PM; Orders forming committee to reactivate project, ascertain responsible for strict action**

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Sunday directed to form a committee on an urgent basis with respect to reactivating the Neelum-Jhelum Hydropower Project.

The prime minister was chairing a meeting to review the progress of the Neelum-Jhelum Hydropower project here at the PM House.

During the meeting, he was informed in a detailed briefing that on April 29, 2024, due to the pressure drop in the right and left head race tunnels of Neelum-Jhelum Hydropower Project, there was a reduction in power generation and on May 2, 2024, power generation from the power plant was completely stopped.

A preliminary investigation report was presented in the meeting by former Federal Interior Secretary Shahid Khan, the head of the investigation committee investigating the recent faults in the Neelum-Jhelum Hydropower Project.

He told the meeting that the closure of the project is causing a loss of millions of rupees to the national exchequer.

It was informed in the meeting that the place where the current fault occurred was the rock burst zone.

The meeting was further informed that during the PTI regime in the year 2021 also due to abnormal drop in pressure in the headrace tunnel, a significant decrease in power generation was seen from the project but this abnormal change in pressure was ignored and not reported. "The matter deliberately suppressed."

During the PTI regime, no repair work was done regarding the failure of the Neelum-Jhelum Hydropower Project in 2021, which continued to increase the losses, the meeting was informed. "It was a criminal negligence."

Defects in Neelum-Jhelum Hydropower Project in 2021 are also being made part of investigation report, the meeting was informed adding that power generation suspended in 2022 due to fault in tailrace tunnel of project.

## NGIA ready to be opened, to become gateway to connect different regions: Ahsan Iqbal



BEIJING (APP): Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives, Prof Ahsan Iqbal said that the New Gwadar International Airport (NGIA) is ready to be opened and hoped that this airport would become an important hub of air transportation and a gateway to connect different regions in future.

The New Gwadar International Airport has been gifted by government of China to the people of Pakistan in general and people of Gwadar particular and it will stand as a monument of Pakistan-China friendship, he told APP during his official visit of China.

Terming the airport as another milestone and flagship of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), the minister hoped that with the training that Pakistani staff will get in China, this airport in future will become an important hub of air transportation and it will become a gateway to connect different regions.

As skilled manpower is a key prerequisite for the operation of the NGIA, 20 Pakistani officials of the airport have embarked on their Multi-disciplinary Training Courses in China.

Under the Training Program, China Airport Construction Group will transfer technical and hands-on knowledge to Pakistani staff to run airport operation independently. This is the first-of-its-kind human resource training courses aiming to hone the technical, administrative and managerial expertise of the staff of NGIA, the Chinese media reported.

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## Court approves 8-day remand of Imran Khan, Bushra Bibi

**Couple's hopes of release dampen after arrest in new Toshakhana reference by NAB**

RAWALPINDI (INP): An accountability court on Sunday approved eight-day physical remand each of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder and former prime minister Imran Khan and his wife, Bushra Bibi, in a fresh graft reference.

The order comes less than a day after the PTI founder and his wife were acquitted in the iddat or illegal marriage case, but their hopes of coming out of prison were dampened as the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) arrested them in a new Toshakhana reference.

Additional Sessions Judge Muhammad Afzal Majoka had a day earlier nixed the couple's conviction — in which they were sentenced to seven years in prison and awarded a fine of Rs500,000 each after a trial court found their nikah to be fraudulent as Khawar Maneka, Bushra's ex-husband, moved the court against the couple's marriage.

However, soon after the verdict overturning their conviction, a team of the anti-corruption watchdog headed by Deputy Director Mohsin Haroon arrested the couple in the Adiala Jail in the new reference related to alleged "misuse of power for acquiring Toshakhana gifts".



ISLAMABAD: Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi and Federal Minister for Overseas Pakistanis and Religious Affairs Chaudhry Salik Hussain presenting a souvenir to Ambassador of Iraq Hamid Abbas Lafta.

## Gilani underscores good governance in tackling Pak socio-economic challenges

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chairman Senate Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani underscored the critical need for effective governance in tackling Pakistan's socio-economic challenges.

Addressing participants of the 35th Senior Management Course at the National Institute of Management (NIM), Islamabad, he highlighted the pivotal role of a profes-



sional and dynamic bureaucracy in achieving national development goals.

Drawing from his extensive experience as Prime Minister and Senate Chairman, he highlighted the transformative impact that dedicated public servants can have on ensuring sustainable national progress.

He stressed the importance of integrating global Sustainable Development Goals into Pakistan's development agenda, asserting that good governance is indispensable for achieving these objectives.

He also pointed out advancements in governance, such as increased parliamentary representation for women, which he deemed crucial for fostering a prosperous Pakistan.

Encouraging course participants to utilize their training for driving inclusive development, he urged them to adapt to evolving domestic, regional, and global dynamics.

He commended NIM for its commitment to excellence in professional training.

The event concluded with the distribution of certificates to course participants from diverse occupational backgrounds.

## Independent lawmakers submit affidavits of allegiance to PTI following SC verdict

ISLAMABAD (INP): Following the Supreme Court's verdict on reserved seats, independent members have begun submitting their affidavits of allegiance to the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI).

A Member of the National Assembly (MNA) from NA-119 Lahore, Mian Muhammad Azhar submitted his affidavit of allegiance to PTI on Sunday.

Mian Muhammad Azhar served the nation as Punjab governor in the former Nawaz League's regime while his son served as minister in the last PTI regime.

Members of the Provincial Assembly of Punjab (MPAs) Sardar Muhammad Ali Khan and Syed Ijaz Hussain Bhatti have also submitted their affidavits of allegiance to PTI. On July 12, in a mammoth legal victory for PTI, the Supreme Court declared that the PTI was eligible for reserved seats and overturned the verdict of Peshawar High Court (PHC) and Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) denying Sunni Ittehad Council (SIC) allocation of reserved seats.

Striking down the ECP's decision of allocating reserved seats to the ruling coalition as "unconstitutional", the 13-judge full court pronounced the majority verdict with 8-5 vote, also declaring as null and void ECP's notification regarding reserved seats.

## Govt mulls NA, Senate session to 'discuss' SC verdict on reserved seats

ISLAMABAD (INP): The government is considering convening the Senate and National Assembly sessions to discuss Supreme Court's decision regarding reserved seats for SIC (Sunni Ittehad Council). It has been learnt on Sunday.

Sources revealed that Minister for Law and Parliamentary Affairs Azam Nazir Tarar has suggested to convene a session of the parliament in a meeting with Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif.

It is learnt that the parliamentarians belonging to the ruling PML-N have been instructed to stay in the capital while a final decision to summon the session will be taken tomorrow (Monday) in a meeting presided over by Nawaz Sharif. According to sources, the government "wanted to devise a strategy before going for review appeal against the Supreme Court decision."

## President, PM condemn assassination attempt on Donald Trump

ISLAMABAD (Online): President Asif Ali Zardari and Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif have condemned assassination attempt on former US president Donald Trump.

In a statement, they prayed for early recovery of Donald Trump and other injured persons and offered heartfelt condolences over the loss of life in the attack.

The President and Prime Minister said any sort of violence has no place in politics.

Speaker National Assembly Sardar Ayaz Sadiq also strongly condemned the attack on former US President Donald Trump's rally in Pennsylvania.

## Aleem Khan says: Eradication of terrorism imperative for progress, development of country

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Privatization, Board of Investment, and Communications Abdul Aleem Khan has said that the eradication of terrorism and the elimination of elements involved in anti-state activities are imperative for the progress, prosperity and development of the country.

"In the larger national interest, every patriot will fully support the 'Azame-Istehkam' Operation," he expressed these views during a meeting with senior IPP leader G.G. Jamal from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Sunday.

He strongly condemned attacks on Pakistan Forces, and said that those involved in such heinous crimes against the forces will face severe consequences.

He assured that there is no cause for despair as the country's future is secure and in safe hands.

He said, that improved law and order are crucial for investment and development, and the country's institutions are fulfilling their responsibilities.

Highlighting Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's strategic importance as a gateway to China, Afghanistan, and Central Asia, he affirmed the government's prioritization of inter-provincial highways and motorways in the region.

"We must collaborate to address common man's issues and resolve the country's complexities," he said.

He urged G.G. Jamal to enhance the party's activity in KPK province, pledging full support from the Central Leadership.

In response, G.G. Jamal thanked Minister Khan and assured him of complete compliance with his directives regarding party affairs.

## Jl protests nationwide against inflation and overbilling

LAHORE (INP): Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) emir Hafiz Naeemur Rehman announced that JI was protesting nationwide against inflation and there would be sit-ins across big and small cities.

He also disclosed about the sit-in on July 26 in Islamabad against the huge spike in electricity tariff and taxes.

Public mobilisation would continue and the movement was against the anti-people budget. He said the party and public would keep protesting until their demands were not met.

Government has to provide relief in the overbilling of electricity and the unfair slab systems. Government is increasing bills on the direction of the IMF.

## China ready to work with Pakistan on Global South development initiative

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chinese ambassador to Pakistan Jiang Zaidong's on Sunday said China was ready to work with Pakistan to "actively implement" its Global South initiative of common development and shared cooperation.

Chinese President Xi Jinping has recently announced a series of measures for the Global South countries including establishing a Global South research center, 1,000 scholarships under the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence Scholarship of Excellence and 100,000 training opportunities to Global South countries in the next five years.

In an interview with APP, the Chinese envoy expressed his country's readiness to implement these measures for Pakistan along with other countries, which he said showed "China's firm determination to promote the development and revitalization of the Global South."

Ambassador Jiang highlighted that China's five principles of peaceful coexistence provided a vision to address the global challenges and ensure a shared vision of global peace, security and prosperity.

The Global South region, he said, in recent years stood out with a strong momentum, with its contribution to world economic growth in the past two decades as high as 80%, and the global share of GDP increased from 24% to more than 40% in the past 40 years. He said in political field, the Global South countries were no longer the silent majority on the international stage, and were regarded as the "key force for the transformation of the international order."

He said President Xi at the recent Beijing Declaration of the Conference marking the 70th Anniversary of the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence pointed out that the Global South should take the lead in building a community with a shared future for mankind.

Pakistan also joined the conference amid high-level representation from more than 100 countries.

The envoy said China was ready to work with all countries to implement this important initiative, and jointly act as the "staunch force for peace, development and global governance, making new contributions to strengthening South-South and North-South cooperation, and promoting human progress".

He said China would firmly support Pakistan in safeguarding its sovereignty and territorial integrity, in pursuing a development path suited to its national conditions.

"China is willing to work with Pakistan to take the opportunity of implementing the outcomes of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's visit to accelerate the building of an even closer China-Pakistan community with a shared future in the new era, and bring more tangible benefits to our two peoples," he said.



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## Pakistan, Iraq work together to make travel easier for pilgrims

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Iraqi ambassador to Pakistan, Hamid Abbas Lafta on Sunday met with Pakistan's Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi and Minister of Overseas Pakistanis Chaudhry Salik Hussain and discussed ways to improve the travel experience for Pakistani pilgrims visiting Iraq.

The meeting was focused on making it easier and more affordable for Pakistani Muslims to travel to Iraq for religious pilgrimages.

The discussion highlighted the possibility of free entry visas for Pakistani pilgrims and increasing the number of people allowed to visit each year.

Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi expressed his serious concern about travel agents charging pilgrims excessive fees and ensured to take action against those breaking the law.

He also requested the Iraqi government to consider the issue of permitting Pakistani pilgrims to keep their passports while in Iraq. The Iraqi ambassador assured full cooperation in making travel easier for Pakistani pilgrims and provided a list of travel agents who had been overcharging visitors. Minister Naqvi in response assured to take action against these agents within a week.

The two sides also agreed to quickly finalize a visa waiver agreement for diplomats and officials from both countries.

Additionally, Pakistan and Iraq are working on a deal that will make it easier for Pakistani workers to obtain work permits in Iraq.

The Iraqi ambassador also congratulated Minister Naqvi on his new position and invited him to visit Iraq.



Daily Voice of Masses Independent

Miles to go

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's budget for the present fiscal year has whipped up seething anger against his administration at home but won him a \$7bn package from the IMF to temporarily shore up an embattled economy. An IMF statement says that it has reached a staff-level agreement with Pakistan on a 37-month Extended Fund Facility. Islamabad will be able to access these funds once the deal is approved by the IMF Executive Board, which is contingent upon "the timely confirmation of necessary financing assurances from Pakistan's bilateral development partners" [read: China]. The programme "aims to capitalise on the hard-won macroeconomic stability achieved over the past year by furthering efforts to strengthen public finances, reduce inflation, rebuild external buffers, and remove economic distortions to spur private sector led growth". While it was relatively easy for the government to cross the first bridge towards the agreement by imposing exceedingly painful direct and indirect taxes on the urban middle classes, the new programme targets will continue to test its commitment to reforms over the life of the deal.

For starters, the IMF wants the authorities to go after the under-taxed sectors and properly tax exporters, retailers and agriculturists to continue fiscal consolidation and increase tax revenues through measures contributing to 3.5pc of GDP. The current budget already aims to raise tax revenues by 1.5pc of GDP to meet the programme goal of 1pc primary surplus this year. Another contentious condition relates to the abolition of agricultural support prices, especially for the staple wheat crop, and associated subsidies. It is pertinent to recall how farmers came out to protest after wheat prices plummeted sharply when the state did not purchase their surplus. The statement indicates that the government has also agreed to phase out incentives to Special Economic Zones, and refrain from new regulatory and tax-based incentives, or any guaranteed returns that could distort the investment landscape, including for projects channelled through the army-led SIFC, to create a level playing field for all businesses. How it will affect SIFC efforts to lure investment from 'friendly' countries is anybody's guess. Other programme goals — periodic power and gas price adjustment, SOE governance reforms and privatisation, transfer of more fiscal responsibility to the provinces, and market-based monetary and exchange rate policies — actually represent the unfinished agenda of the previous programmes. The agreement has indeed provided much-needed breathing space to the government, but it has also created serious political challenges for it. While most reforms agreed with the Fund are the need of the hour for future debt sustainability, others are going to seriously impact economic growth and fresh investments, at least in the short term. The country's finance team must feel relief after clinching the deal. But they should remember that it has just kicked the can a little further down the road. The challenges facing the economy will compound soon if this relief is not turned into an opportunity.

Distress signals

Muna Khan

Oh, to have been a fly in the room as Democrats watched the presidential debate between Joe Biden and Donald Trump. They were quick to shoot down media reports about panic in the room. The delegates who endorsed Biden's bid even double down on their choice: only Biden can defeat Trump. But with each passing day, as the date for election nears, there are calls from various stakeholders, including Democrats, columnists and actor George Clooney, for Biden to step aside. At the time of my writing, eight lawmakers had called for Biden to step down.

(As a quick aside, I have no skin in this game because it does not matter whether a Republican or a Democrat president chastises us, bombs us or sanctions us. Funny enough, it is the Pakistanis in the US I fear more who are hell-bent on punishing the country for not working hard enough to get Imran Khan back in power.)

The cruelest calls against Biden are not from the usual suspects — politicians who are panicking about their future — but the media, particularly those who cheered for Biden and are now throwing him under the bus. Like one New York Times columnist who wrote in October that an "older wiser president ... had vital strengths..." to writing it was time to "find a way to ease Biden out" — in a span of nine months.

Of course, people are allowed to change their minds when presented with evidence but many in the media defended this presidency when there was a lot to question. He has given the least press conferences and media interviews than any of the last seven presidents, and this in-

cludes the one he gave on Thursday, under pressure I assume, where he flubbed twice. Trump hated the press but gave way more interviews. (Another quick aside, Modi has held just one press conference in his entire tenure as prime minister and is routinely criticised for his inaccessibility.)

Biden's cognitive difficulty came into view earlier this year in public events when he misremembered names, fumbled here and there, and was reported to have mishandled state documents. It became painfully clear during the debate. To then watch many in the Biden media camp shift the conversation to 'why doesn't anyone ask Donald Trump to step down' seemed disingenuous, especially since the same media has been against Trump since he announced his candidacy in 2015. I watched panelists on American media say the threat of Trump returning to power is so high that questioning Biden's health amounted to "enabling fascism". Those who did ask about his age or his way of walking were accused of "ableism". It's preposterous to say the press is being ableist in asking about Biden's policy on Palestine. It is an important issue among voters and may even play a role in determining November's result.

It's not the range of voices calling for Biden's head or Trump's that concerns me as much as how journalism failed to do its job — 2016 part II. And the implications of it.

Take the lack of proportionality following the presidential debate, where coverage on Biden that night was "full-blown hysteria" wrote Jennifer Schulze in Heartland Signal. She counted 192 news and opinion pieces on Biden in The New York Times, compared to 92 stories

on Trump, in a period of less than a week. Through all this "journalism values like facts and context are taking a back seat", she wrote. What's leading is disinformation — Twitter has diagnosed him with Parkinson's, there are manipulated videos suggesting he wears diapers. It is followed closely by TV pundits, who are blaming the White House staff for Biden's performance. The White House, meanwhile, is blaming it on a cold and jetlag.

Perhaps poor journalism should take the blame as the debate moderators did not question Trump for a lot of false claims he made. Why can't both be done: reporting on how/why Trump is bad for democracy and reporting on Biden's competency to run? Can journalists reclaim their profession from the pundits out there making a buck for their bosses, making decisions not based on journalism's values but on 'what we think right now'.

Technology has disrupted the way people consume information but the purpose of journalism has not changed: it is to hold the powerful to account. It is not to shield one candidate's declining health because you fear the other guy is 'bad'.

Journalists here can learn a lot from this, namely there are no friends in the corridors of power. Today, you are besties with Prime Minister X, posing in bathtubs, rubbishing the opposition but then you're on the out when it's Prime Minister Y's turn. The best way to save democracy is to adhere to journalism's best practices that enables audiences to make informed decisions come election time. -- Courtesy Dawn

Indo-Pak CBMs

Aizaz Ahmad Chaudhry

Developing confidence-building measures is a time-tested practice to reduce tensions between adversaries. The term was first used during the Cold War. Ever since, CBMs have sought to manage the risk of conflict escalation. In that sense, they are a kind of preventive diplomacy.

Since the signing of the 1972 Shimla agreement, India and Pakistan have undertaken several measures to build mutual trust with a view to keeping peace and preventing wars. Although many of these CBMs have helped reduce the risk of military confrontation, the two countries have failed to build a lasting peace, mainly because of deep-rooted mutual distrust. There have been three broad categories of CBMs that have sought to promote peace and security between India and Pakistan: nuclear, conventional, and Kashmir-related.

Although both countries conducted nuclear tests in 1998, they had agreed in 1988 to prohibit attacks against each other's nuclear installations and facilities. Three years later, they signed an agreement on the prevention of air space violations. This agreement has been largely respected notwithstanding occasional violations.

CBMs came to dominate the diplomatic discourse of India and Pakistan after the signing of the Lahore Declaration and an MoU on nuclear CBMs in 1999. The process, which was disrupted by the Kargil crisis, resumed in 2004, when the two countries formed expert groups to discuss conventional and nuclear CBMs. Within a few years, two important agreements were concluded: on advance notification of

flight testing of ballistic missiles (2005) and on the risk from accidents relating to nuclear weapons (2007). Both remain operational. As a nuclear risk reduction measure, it was agreed in 2007 to establish a hotline between the Pakistani and Indian foreign secretaries, but this could not be put into actual use.

The experts group on nuclear CBMs discussed a number of other ideas, which, regrettably, came to naught. These included the exchange of information on peaceful uses of nuclear energy and nuclear safety, early notification of nuclear-related emergencies, bilateral declarations on non-deployment of anti-ballistic missiles, and non-use of outer space for military purposes. The two countries did not engage in discussions on nuclear doctrines. Nor did they create a mechanism to review the implementation of the 1999 Lahore MoU on nuclear CBMs.

Conventionally, two CBMs have worked well to prevent war between the two countries: an understanding reached in 2003 on maintaining the ceasefire along the Line of Control (LoC), which was reaffirmed in February 2021, and a hotline between the DGs of Military Operations.

A few CBMs have remained operational despite India's policy of 'no-contact with Pakistan' since 2016. For instance, a hotline between the Indian coast guards and Pakistan's Maritime Security Agency is operational; the agreement to give advance notice on military exercises, manoeuvres, and troop movement is also being adhered to. The two sides frequently return inadvertent line crossers.

Several CBMs that remained functional for some years are no longer operational. For instance, the Delhi-Lahore bus service agreed in 1999 is

not in operation. Nor is the Khokhrapar-Munabao train service agreed in 2006. The passenger and freight rail service between Atari and Lahore remains suspended. An important CBM that was essential for coordinating on border issues (annual meetings of the Indian Border Security Force and Pakistan's Rangers) has also become inactive.

A draft agreement on the prevention of incidents at sea was discussed but could not be finalised. Given the importance of the subject, the two countries could make a fresh attempt at an appropriate time to agree on this CBM. They could also agree to hold quarterly flag meetings in selected sectors of the LoC. Another important measure to build mutual confidence would be interactions between the national defence universities and think tanks of the two countries.

Between 2005 and 2008, a number of Kashmir-related CBMs were agreed and implemented in order to bring relief to divided Kashmiri families. A few meeting points along the LoC were also agreed. A bus service started to operate between Muzaffarabad and Srinagar. Trade between Kashmiris on both sides of the LoC also started. Regrettably, these CBMs have been suspended by the Indian side. CBMs work well only if there is willingness amongst adversaries to reduce the risk of conflict and war. Failed peace processes and hostile rhetoric have undermined mutual confidence. At this time, the two countries are totally estranged. However, whenever they re-engage, the considerable work done for CBMs during the past few decades can provide a useful foundation for the building of a durable peace. -- Courtesy Dawn

Commerce News

IPO-Pakistan drive country's economic growth' prosperity

ISLAMABAD (APP): Farukh Amil, Chairman IPO-Pakistan, emphasized the critical role of intellectual property in driving economic growth and prosperity. The Chairman IPO-Pakistan has stressed for the critical role of intellectual property in safeguarding national security and driving economic growth during a meeting with Ambassador (Retd) Qazi M Khalilullah, Executive Director, Center for International Strategic Studies Sindh (CISSS) for, said a press release issued here on Sunday.

Chair IPO-Pakistan stressed that a robust intellectual property system is vital for attracting investments, promoting entrepreneurship, and protecting innovations in strategic technologies.

"The effective protection and management of intellectual property is essential for a nation's economic and national security," Faruk Amil said. "It encourages innovation, attracts foreign investment, and helps to build a competitive edge in the global market." He further emphasized that intellectual property protection is critical for the development of strategic industries such as telecommunications, biotechnology, artificial intelligence, and cybersecurity.

The meeting was attended by key officials from CISSS and IPO-Pakistan, including Mr. Aftab Hussain, Director Research, CISSS, Dr. Saba Sahar, Associate Director, CISSS, Lt Col Azfar Bilal Qureshi Ti (M) (Retd), Associate Director

Research, CISSS, and Ms. Saima Kanwal, Senior Patent Examiner, IPO-Pakistan. The participants discussed the importance of intellectual property in the knowledge economy and its impact on national security and economic prosperity.

Ambassador @ Qazi M Khalilullah expressed interest in exploring areas of mutual collaboration between CISSS and IPO-Pakistan to strengthen intellectual property regimes and promote research and development in strategic technologies. "This collaboration will help to identify and protect innovation and intellectual property in strategic sectors, ultimately contributing to the economic growth and national security of Pakistan," Ambassador Khalilullah said.

'Pakistan needs economic plan to offset debt servicing impact'

LAHORE (APP): Pakistan is blessed with huge potentials to flood the world markets with its goods and fetch billions of dollars in return. Pakistan needs an urgent economic growth plan to offset the impact of debt servicing, which consumes half of the national fiscal budget annually.

SAARC Chamber of Commerce and Industry's former President Iftikhar Ali Malik expressed these views in a meeting with former ambassador and founder Secretary General of SAARC Chamber, Rehmat Ullah Javed, here Sunday. He said the government should formulate economic policies with the sole objective to facilitate the private sector, which is the engine of growth and successive governments should carry on the same policy to retain the private sector's confidence, besides

helping a stable exchange rate for investments and the governments should remove all taxes from the exports sector, promote digital economy and step up for the research and development in all fields.

He said that exporters facilitation centres under one-window, simplifying cumbersome procedures, ending of bureaucratic and other hurdles, ensuring the allocations of sufficient energy supplies to the exports manufacturing units and initiation of the technical, vocational education in the country, are key factors achieving economic growth. Iftikhar Ali Malik also asked the private sector to stop going for tax concessions and subsidies, start training its workforce, appoint laborers on a permanent basis and not on contract or daily wagers to give them a sense of job protections.

Consumers of 200 units to get free solar panels

LAHORE (APP): People using up to 200 units will get free solar panels soon, while those using up to 500 units would receive solar panels on 10 per cent payment. The Punjab government would pay 90 per cent of the total amount for provision of solar panels.

In this connection Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif's promise is being fulfilled with people. The CM has decided to launch distribution of solar panels from Aug 14, Independence Day. The interest-free loan would be provided for provision of solar panels, which would paid back in five years through banks. In the light of the CM announcement, methodology regarding provision of solar panels to people had been settled. The chief minister said that people's electricity bills would be reduced by 40pc with the provision of solar panels. "It is my sole mission to provide maximum relief to people.



PESHAWAR: Activists of Jamat-e-Islami (JI) are holding protest demonstration against price hiking and the highly inflated electricity bills, at Peshawar press club.

Minister for launching gems processing, export city project

PESHAWAR (APP): Under the chairmanship of Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Special Assistant for Industry, Crafts and Technical Education Abdul Karim Tordir, in the committee room of the Department of Industry, the goals given to the departments and institutions related to the establishment of the new project of "Namak Mandi Gems Processing and Export City".

A review meeting was held, in addition to Secretary Industry Amir Afaq, Senior Planning Officer Basit Khalil, Urban Mobility

Authority, KP Azdemik, Board of Investment and Trade, BRT and other institutions officers and all office-bearers of the Pakistan Commercial Exporter Association. Chairman Minhajuddin and association official Sartaj Khan participated. In the meeting, the efforts made so far and the goals achieved to implement this important project were informed to the forum. A city equipped with a comprehensive and global facility for processing and trading of gems will be set up but a lot of progress has been made and with the consent of the relevant

stakeholders, it will be established at BRT's commercial plaza in Chamkani. A plan has been proposed. In this way, International Mailing Office (IMO), Customs Office, banking facility and other global facilities will be provided in this city, while trying to facilitate the steps required for foreign investors to come here. On this occasion, the Special Assistant strictly instructed that this project is a very important project for the economic and economic development of the province and unnecessary length.

Digital Economy-a technological tool to unlock Pakistan's growth

ISLAMABAD (APP): With a growing youth population, increasing internet penetration and thriving startup ecosystem, Pakistan is poised to become a significant player in digital economy and achieve the goal of national growth and prosperity.

However, experts have underlined the importance of strengthening digital infrastructure to exploit its true potential and lead the country towards sustainable development. The Information Technology (IT) is one of the top sectors to lead digital economy.

According to Economic Survey of Pakistan (2023-24), the IT industry currently generates an annual export of around US\$ 2.6 billion and to achieve the ambitious target of yearly exports of US\$ 15 billion in next five years, at least 200,000 proficient and specialized IT professionals are necessary.

"We need to strengthen IT infrastructure and produce skilled manpower to take full advantage of the potential existing in digital economy," said Chairman Pakistan Information Technology Industry Association (PSHA), Muhammad Zohaib Khan. Highlighting importance of building the sector on modern lines to meet international standards, he also underscored the importance of improving digital infrastructure and increasing internet connectivity. The present coalition government is paying special attention towards information technology (IT) and had earmarked over Rs 79 billion for it in the budget 2024-25, the highest allocation in country's history. "The sector is expected to touch \$3.5

billion exports this year and the government is planning to enhance its exports to US \$7 billion in years to come," asserted Finance Minister, Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb while highlighting the importance of this sector in his budget speech. "Over Rs19 billion would be utilized for establishing IT Park in Karachi and a Technology Park in Islamabad. In addition Rs two billion would be spent for Pakistan Software Export Board (PSEB) and Rs 20 billion are for Digital Infrastructure Information," the minister added.

There is no denying the fact that during past decade, Pakistan has witnessed a significant increase in internet penetration, with internet users growing to 111.0 million at the start of 2024, stated Data Portal, a website publishing Global Digital reports series. It says Pakistan was home to 71.70 million social media users in January 2024, equating to 29.5 percent of the total population. A total of 188.9 million cellular mobile connections were active in Pakistan in early 2024, with this figure equivalent to 77.8 percent of the total population.

As reported by the China Economic Net (CEN), both parties engaged in detailed discussions about the local transportation market demand in Pakistan, product development trends, and specific cooperation modalities. Chinese company expressed its willingness to provide Road King with technical support, product optimization, and marketing assistance for solar e-bikes. The aim is to jointly create high-quality transportation products that cater to local market needs.

China-Pak companies partnership to introduce Eco-Friendly solar E-Bikes

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chinese and Pakistani companies have reached a preliminary cooperation agreement to introduce eco-friendly solar e-bikes to Pakistan.

The joint venture involves Road King, a leading electric scooter brand in Pakistan, and AGAO Solar Mobility, a China-based startup specializing in solar-powered scooters, as reported by a private news channel.

As reported by the China Economic Net (CEN), both parties engaged in detailed discussions about the local transportation market demand in Pakistan, product development trends, and specific cooperation modalities.



ISLAMABAD: A girl selecting and purchasing keychain with her name from vendor at famous picnic spot Daman-e-Koh.



## Chinese delegation calls on CM KP KP govt plans to utilize China's advanced technology for sustainable development

PESHAWAR (Online): A delegation of Chinese private sector Investment Company called on Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Sardar Ali Amin Khan Gandapur here at Chief Minister's House Peshawar the other day, and discussed with him the matters related to investment in the different sectors of the province.

The delegates on this occasion, expressed their willingness to invest in the industrial and mineral sectors of the province, saying that the company will submit its viable proposals within a week in this regard.

The Chief Minister has directed the concerned authorities to attentively examine the proposals to be submitted by the company, and come up with an action plan for further progress.

While highlighting the extensive investment opportunities in the different potential sectors of the province, the Chief Minister offered them investment in agriculture, livestock, solar energy and other important sectors, adding that we will not

only encourage foreign investment but also provide all possible facilities to the investors.

He said that the provincial government plans to utilize China's advanced technology for the sustainable development of agriculture sector, and looks forward to cooperation in this regard.

The Chief Minister maintained that his government is also working on the solarization projects, under which government offices, educational institutions,



LAHORE: Punjab Minister for Industries and Commerce Chaudhary Shafay Hussain presides over the first meeting of District Coordination Committee Gujrat.

## Minister urged work for welfare of tobacco growers

**Independent Report**  
PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Excise Minister Mian Khaliq-ur-Rehman and Finance Advisor Muzamil Aslam presided over a meeting on tobacco wherein they discussed ways and means to adopt steps for the welfare of the people associated with it.

In the meeting, Excise Minister Mian Khaliq-ur-Rehman said that due to better measures regarding cess and excise tax, there is a significant increase in revenue and this increase will be spent for the welfare

of the people of the province.

Advocate General Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Shah Faisal Usman Khel, Secretary Agriculture Javed Marwat and Secretary Law Akhtar Saeed Turk were also present in the meeting. During the meeting, it was agreed that tobacco is a crop that falls under the category of agriculture and after the 81<sup>st</sup> amendment, the province has the authority over the agricultural sector.

In the meeting, it was agreed that Cess is a

## 600 apply for VC posts in 25 govt universities

LAHORE (APP): More than 600 candidates aspiring for permanent vice chancellor (VC) slots in 25 government universities in the province have come forward, Higher Education Department (HED) sources told APP.

In this regard HED has started screening the candidates.

According to the details, the government has directed the HED to complete the scrutiny process by July 20. Among the 25 universities, 3 universities for women are also included.

## Encroachment being eliminated from minority worship places: Arora

LAHORE (APP): Provincial Minister for Minority Affairs and President of the Pakistan Sikh Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee, Sardar Ramesh Singh Arora, has stated that following the vision of Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif, lands belonging to minority worship places in the province are being reclaimed from illegal occupants.

The Constitution of Pakistan guarantees complete religious freedom and rights to the minorities living in the beloved country. The pond at Gurdwara Babe Di Beri had been under the control of the land mafia for the

past 77 years. Before 1947, Sikh pilgrims used to bathe in this pond before visiting Gurdwara Babe Di Beri. We are thankful to the local leadership, district administration, police, and civil societies for reclaiming the pond from the land mafia, he added.

He said this while speaking to the media during his visit to the pond at Gurdwara Babe Di Beri, Sialkot. Arora said that the Auqaf Department should investigate the leasing of religious worship places. He stated that lands belonging to minority worship places in Punjab will be reclaimed from illegal occupants.



MULTAN: Security officials holding a flag march to develop a sense of protection among the masses and maintain law and order during the holy month of Muharram.



LAHORE: A view of deserted Mall road during Sunday Holiday in the Provincial Capital.

## Arrangements completed for security of majalis, processions: Minister

SIALKOT (APP): Provincial Transport Minister Bilal Akbar Khan has said that on the instructions of Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif, arrangements have been completed for the security of majalis and processions during Ashura in Sialkot district. To maintain peace and order and inter-faith harmony in the district, the government and administration have the full support of public representatives, scholars and citizens. He expressed these views during his visit to Sialkot along with Commissioner Gujranwala Division Syed Naveed

Haider Shirazi. Members of Punjab Assembly (MPAs) Muhammad Manshaullah Butt, Chaudhry Faisal Ikram, Rana Muhammad Arif Harnah, Chaudhry Tariq Subhani were also present on the occasion, while Deputy Commissioner Muhammad Zulqarnain and District Police Officer (DPO) Sialkot Hassan Iqbal gave a briefing. Provincial Transport Minister Bilal Akbar Khana and Commissioner Gujranwala Division Syed Naveed Haider Shirazi also inspected the Central Control Room established in the Deputy Commissioner Office.

## Ayub Medical Institution holds 100<sup>th</sup> Board of Governors meeting

ABBOTTABAD (APP): Ayub Medical Institution's Board of Governors on Sunday successfully held its 100<sup>th</sup> meeting in the conference hall of Ayub Medical College, marking a significant milestone in the institution's history, board meeting was presided over by Chairman Dr. Abid Jameel.

The Board of Governors conducted a thorough review of the institution's current state and future plans. Discussions were centered on strategic measures aimed at enhancing the quality of medical education, patient care, and administrative efficiency. In addition to the meeting, the board members conducted an on-site visit to Ayub Medical College.

They engaged in detailed discussions regarding the renovation of the seminar hall and other departments and evaluated the educational and operational aspects of the institution. The visit aimed to ensure that the college's infrastructure and resources meet the highest standards necessary for medical education and healthcare services.

## Poverty Alleviation—Embarking on bumpy ride

LAHORE (APP): Amidst serious economic challenges, the Punjab government has embarked on a daunting task of reigning in poverty and bringing some respite to poverty struck people across the province.

Although taking on the complex phenomenon of poverty is itself a herculean task having multiple economic, social, political and cultural dimensions yet undeterred obligation and commitment may make some way to relieve those hit by abject poverty.

Since many countries in the developed world have made progress in poverty reduction,

developing countries are still suffering from substantial inequities and struggling to move forward and Pakistan is also not an exception.

A recent study by (May 2024) Pakistan Institute of Development Economics (PIDE) has revealed overall poverty rate in Pakistan nearly around 39 percent and in Punjab around 30 percent with people in rural areas more poor than those in urban areas and the province as a whole having lowest incidence of multidimensional poverty.

"Poverty is rising and we need to control it. Those leading a bit better life a few years back are

now close to poverty line and can slip down," remarked former Deputy Governor, State Bank of Pakistan Riaz Riazuddin. "Low income groups are under extreme pressure while budget of middle-income households is also squeezing with every passing day."

He emphasized short, medium and long term policies to curtail poverty as he said "although reducing or eradicating poverty is far more important than measuring poverty, monitoring the poverty situation is also essential for attainment of poverty goals."

The first goal of the United Nation's 17

Sustainable Development Goals is "eradicating extreme poverty for all people everywhere by 2030" and Pakistan's progress on SDG1 has been steady, despite a setback in FY20 due to Covid-19.

"We need multi-pronged strategy. Our short term policies should focus on identifying the poor so the cash can be transferred unconditionally to poor households for meeting immediate essential needs (mainly food)," Riazuddin said. "Medium- and long-term policies should include conditional cash transfers that empower the poor to acquire education and vocational skills to

become part of the labor force or supplement their income if they are already employed in low-paying jobs." He stressed that prudent macroeconomic management must also be part of medium-term policies to keep inflation under check and sustain growth and employment.

In the present circumstances, the most challenging task is to control inflation and price hike, petrol and power prices and hit hard on hoarders and market mafias to save more and more people from falling below the poverty line.

Although both the Federal and the Punjab governments.

## International News

## Trump urges Americans to unite after assassination attempt

**Monitoring Desk**  
WASHINGTON: Donald Trump called on Americans on Sunday to stand united after he was injured in an assassination attempt — a shocking incident that opened a dark new chapter in an already polarised US presidential race.

Trump was shot in the ear during a campaign rally, streaking the Republican presidential candidate's blood across his face and prompting his security agents to swarm him, before he emerged and pumped his fist in the air, mouthing the words "Fight! Fight! Fight!"

Hours after the incident, the US Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) said it had identified the shooter in the assassination attempt as 20-year-old Thomas Matthew Crooks of Pennsylvania, US media

reported early on Sunday. Crooks and one rally attendee were killed and two other spectators were injured, the US Secret Service said in a statement.

The incident was being investigated as an assassination attempt, a source told Reuters.

"In this moment, it is more important than ever that we stand United," Trump said in a statement on his Truth Social network, adding that Americans should not allow "evil to win". The Republican added that it was "God alone who prevented the unthinkable from happening" and that he would "fear not". Incumbent US President Joe Biden has since spoken to Trump after the incident, according to a White House Official. Biden also spoke with Pennsylvania Governor

Josh Shapiro and Butler Mayor Bob Dandoy, the official said.

Trump, 78, had just started his speech when the shots rang out. He grabbed his right ear with his right hand, then brought his hand down to look at it before dropping to his knees behind the podium before Secret Service agents swarmed and covered him.

He emerged about a minute later, his red "Make America Great Again" hat knocked off, and could be heard saying "wait, wait," before agents ushered him into a vehicle.

"I was shot with a bullet that pierced the upper part of my right ear," Trump said on his Truth Social platform following the shooting in Butler, Pennsylvania, about 30 miles (50 kilometres) north of Pittsburgh.



Republican presidential candidate and former US President Donald Trump raises his fist as he is assisted by US Secret Service after he was shot at during a campaign rally at the in Butler, Pennsylvania.

## Biden condemns 'sick' violence after Trump injured in campaign rally shooting

**Monitoring Desk**  
WASHINGTON: US President Joe Biden led the condemnation after his election rival Donald Trump was wounded in an apparent assassination attempt at a Pennsylvania rally on Saturday, as some Republicans blamed the Biden campaign for the violence.

Political leaders on both sides of the aisle slammed the attack minutes after the Republican candidate was rushed off stage by the Secret Service with blood running down his face.

## Nepal retrieves more bodies from buses swept away by landslide

**Monitoring Desk**  
CHITWAN: Nepali search teams retrieved more bodies on Sunday of the roughly 50 people missing after a landslide triggered by torrential rains swept two buses into a fast-flowing river. Over 300 officers, including divers, were scouring the river for passengers and the two buses themselves, said Kumar Neupane, spokesperson for Nepal's armed police unit.

Other teams on boats were using sensor equip-

"There's no place in America for this kind of violence. It's sick. It's sick. It's one of the reasons why we have to unite this country... We cannot be like this, we cannot condone this," Biden told reporters in an emergency briefing at his house in Rehoboth Beach, Delaware.

"The idea that there's political violence, or violence in America like this, is just unheard of. It's just not appropriate. Everybody, everybody must condemn it. Everybody," Biden said.

## North Korea's Kim sacks 'irresponsible' officials over new town project

**Monitoring Desk**  
SEOUL: North Korean leader Kim Jong Un has sacked or demoted some senior officials for their "irresponsible" handling of his flagship project to build a new town in the country's north, state media KCNA said on Sunday.

Kim announced the decision while visiting Samjiyon, where North Korea has been building what it called a "socialist utopia" and "a model of highly-civilised mountain city" with new apartments.

## Palestinian president blames Hamas for continuing war in Gaza

**Monitoring Desk**  
RAMALLAH: Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas said Israel and the United States were responsible for an attack that killed dozens in the Gaza Strip on Saturday, but the Western-backed leader also blamed Hamas for the continuing war in Gaza. His comments signal rising tension between Abbas's Fatah faction and the Islamist Hamas group, which accused the Palestinian president of taking Israel's side.

## Hamas says Gaza cease-fire talks haven't paused and claims military chief survived Israeli strike

**Monitoring Desk**  
MUWASI: Hamas said Sunday that Gaza cease-fire talks continue and the group's military commander is in good health, a day after the Israeli military targeted Mohammed Deif with a massive airstrike that local health officials said killed at least 90 people, including children.

Deif's condition remained uncertain after Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said Saturday night "there still isn't absolute certainty" he was killed.

Hamas representatives gave no evidence to back up their assertion about the health of a chief architect of the Oct. 7 attack that sparked the war.

The Israeli military on Sunday announced that Rafa Salama, a Hamas commander it described as one of Deif's closest associates, had been killed in Saturday's strike. Salama

commanded Hamas's Khan Younis brigade. The statement gave no update on Deif, who has long topped Israel's most-wanted list and has been in hiding for years.

Hamas rejected the idea that mediated cease-fire discussions had been suspended after the strike. Spokesperson Jihad Taha said "there is no doubt that the horrific massacres will impact any efforts in the negotiations" but added that "efforts and endeavors of the mediators remain ongoing."

The killing of Deif would mark the highest profile assassination of any Hamas leader by Israel since the war began. It would be both a huge victory for Israel and a deep psychological blow for the militant group.

Netanyahu said all of Hamas' leaders are "marked for death" and asserted that killing them would move Hamas closer to accepting a cease-fire deal.

## North Korea denounces NATO, US as 'most serious threat' to global peace

**Monitoring Desk**  
SEOUL: North Korea said on Saturday it "most strongly denounces" a NATO declaration accusing Pyongyang of helping Russia's war against Ukraine and US efforts to expand its alliances with the bloc and Asian countries.

NATO leaders on Wednesday accused North Korea and Iran of fuelling Russia's war by providing direct military support to Moscow.

The summit also stressed a membership pledge for Kyiv and took a stronger stance on China's support for Moscow.

"The 'Washington Summit Declaration,' cooked up and made public on July 10, goes to prove that the US and NATO, reduced to a tool for its confrontation, pose

the most serious threat to the global peace and security," North Korea's state media KCNA quoted a foreign ministry spokesperson as saying.

It said the US moves to expand military blocs with NATO countries and Asian partners, including South Korea and Japan were "the vicious root cause of seriously threatening the regional peace, extremely exacerbating the international security environment and sparking off worldwide arms race."

On the sidelines of the summit, South Korea and the United States signed guidelines on establishing an integrated system of extended deterrence for the Korean peninsula to counter nuclear and military threats from North Korea.

## Maldives climate minister released in 'black magic' case

**Monitoring Desk**  
MALE: A former Maldives climate change minister detained last month on allegations she performed "black magic" on the country's president was released on Saturday, police said.

Fathimath Shammaz Ali Saleem was arrested along with her sister and another person last month in the capital Male and stood down from her post shortly afterwards.

Local media reported she was accused of performing "black magic" on President Mohamed Muizzu to win favour from his new administration.

Police had asked for an extension of her detention twice, but on Saturday they had no reason to hold her any longer — although the case was still ongoing.

## UK Labour government announces ambitious 'rooftop revolution' to boost solar power

**Monitoring Desk**  
LONDON: British Prime Minister Keir Starmer's Labour government on Saturday unveiled plans for a significant expansion of solar panel installations on homes across the UK, in a move to address the climate crisis and reduce domestic energy bills.

The "rooftop revolution" initiative aims to significantly increase the number of households utilizing solar energy.

Energy Secretary Ed Miliband revealed the plans, which include the approval of three major solar farms in eastern England. The projects, previously blocked by Conservative ministers, are set to significantly boost the country's solar capacity.

The approved sites are Gate Burton in Lincolnshire, Sunnica's en-

ergy farm on the Suffolk-Cambridgeshire border, and Mallard Pass on the Lincolnshire-Rutland border.

Combined, the farms will generate two-thirds of the solar energy installed across the UK last year.

With the King's speech scheduled for Wednesday, which will feature legislation to establish GB Energy, a new publicly-owned energy company, the government is also focusing on collaboration with the building industry.

The goal is to streamline the process of installing solar panels on new and existing homes. Discussions are underway to introduce solar-related standards for new-build properties starting next year. Currently, while installing solar panels does not require formal planning permission.



## Romina says: Tackling microplastic pollution, national priority for protecting public health, environment

ISLAMABAD (APP): Coordinator to Prime Minister on Climate Change, Romina Khurshid Alam said that although Pakistan ranks at the lowest among the countries facing mounting risk of human uptake of microplastics through various food and non-food sources, the present government remains committed and taking all-out measures in collaboration with all provincial governments for tackling the menace of the plastic to protect public health and the environment from adverse impacts of the plastic pollution.

"Managing plastics throughout their product life-cycle and reducing the use of plastics, when possible, to move towards a more sustainable plastics economy, is challenging but critical to mitigate the accumulation of microplastics in the environment and their uptake by humans through various organisms like fish, mussels and oysters," the PM's climate aide said in a press statement issued on Sunday from the climate change and environmental coordination ministry.

In Pakistan each person inhales 31 in 1,000 plas-

tic particles per day whereas the per capita dietary intake of microplastics in the country is around 31 milligram per day, according to a recent study on 'Microplastic Human Dietary Uptake' published last month (May 2024) in the Environmental Science & Technology research journal of global repute.

The uptake of microplastics refers to the process by which organisms, particularly aquatic organisms, ingest or absorb tiny plastic particles from their environment. The microplastics are small plastic fragments less than 5 millimeters in size, either manufactured at that size (primary microplastics) or resulting from the breakdown of larger plastic items (secondary microplastics).

Found in industrial waste and beauty products or may form during the degradation of larger pieces of plastic waste, the presence of microplastics in various ecosystems has now raised concerns among the environmentalists and health specialists globally about their long-term detrimental consequences on

biodiversity, ecosystem function and human health.

"Various studies have concluded that leaching from our plastic water bottles, knives and dermatologic products to enter our bodies, human uptake of the microplastics serious health issues such as endocrine disruption, weight gain, insulin resistance, decreased reproductive health, and cancer, said PM's climate aide.

The aide Romina Khurshid Alam, who is leading national anti-plastic campaign in support with provincial governments, industrial and corporate sectors, also highlighted that microplastics are now globally a growing environmental and public health concern, as they are detected extensively in freshwater and marine environments, ingested, absorbed or consumed as food by organisms, and then enter the human body.

Industrial development drives this environmental burden caused by microplastic formation and human uptake by elevating plastic pollution levels and shaping the domestic dietary structure, she added.



ISLAMABAD: Senior IPP leader from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Ghazi Gulab Jamal calls on the President of IPP and Federal Minister for Privatisation, Investment Board and Communications Abdul Aleem Khan.

## 6 wildlife protectors get national awards for exemplary efforts

ISLAMABAD (APP): A joint committee of the Ministry of Climate Change and Environmental Coordination (MOCC&EC), the Snow Leopard Foundation Pakistan (SLF), and provincial wildlife departments here on Saturday announced the six winners of the Pakistan Wildlife Protection Awards 2024.

The announcement recognizes outstanding contributions to wildlife conservation across Gilgit-Baltistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Azad Jammu and Kashmir. The initiative is supported by the British government's Illegal Wildlife Trade Challenge Fund (IWTFCF), a news release said.

Sarmad Shafa, Range Forest Officer of the Gilgit-Baltistan Forest, Wildlife & Environment Department won the Snow Leopard Award in the national category. Faizal Duki, Range Forest Officer, and Kamaluddin, Wildlife Inspector, of the Gilgit-Baltistan Forest, Wildlife & Environment Department won the Ibbex Award and the Blue Sheep Award for their conservation and protection efforts in Gilgit-Baltistan.

Two seasoned officers of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Wildlife Department, the Wildlife Ranger Syed Mussadiq Ali Shah, and the Deputy Ranger Wildlife Zahid Ahmad were declared winners of the Markhor Award and the Wolf Award respectively.

The Musk Deer Award is earned by Jan Muhammad Nasir, Game Watcher, Forestry, Wildlife & Fisheries Department AJK.

The Coordinator to the Prime Minister for Climate Change and Environmental Coordination, Romina Khurshid Alam, praised the winners for their invaluable contributions. "These awards are a testament to the dedication and hard work of individuals and organizations who are at the forefront of wildlife conservation in Pakistan."

## Summer school camp students visit Safe City Islamabad

Independent Report tags.

The student delegation was briefed that Safe City Islamabad is playing a vital role in various departments through modern technology, including the Police Operations and Monitoring Center, Emergency Control Center, Dispatch Control Center, E-Challan System, and the "Pukar-15" helpline, and contributing to the security of the city, crime prevention, and the protection of the lives and property of citizens. They highlighted the functioning and benefits of Safe City facial recognition cameras, which help identify individuals on the city's internal and external roads and play a crucial role in identifying suspicious elements. On this occasion, the summer school students expressed their happiness during their visit to Safe City.

In this regard, the children from the Islamabad Police Summer School camp visited Safe City Islamabad, a public relations officer said.

On the directions of DG Safe City Malik Jameel Zafar, the Director Technical and Personal Staff Officer briefed the students on Safe City Islamabad's centralized system, Command and Control Center, advanced technology-based cameras, and their operations and advan-



ISLAMABAD: People are facing difficulties due to closed public transport at Islamabad Expressway in the Federal Capital during Tehreek-e-Labbai Pakistan (TLP) sit-in protest (Dharna).

## Arshad Khan Jadoon says: PCP collaborating with all stakeholders to uphold freedom of expression, media ethics

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chairman of Press Council of Pakistan (PCP) Arshad Khan Jadoon has said that the Council is collaborating with all stakeholders to uphold freedom of expression and media ethics.

During a meeting with a delegation comprising the President of the Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists (PFUJ) Afzal Butt, President of the Islamabad High Court Journalists Association Fayaz Mahmood, former Presidents Asad Malik, Aamir Saeed Abbasi, Saqib Bashir, Senior Vice President Hussain Chaudhry, Finance Secre-

tary Shehzad Ali Raja, Ikhtisham Kiani, Aamir Baloch, Ibrahim Abbasi, Idrees Abbasi, Additional Secretary Adil Saeed Abbasi, and Rizwan Qazi, the Chairman said that the issues of the journalist community would be addressed on a priority basis. The Chairman also briefed the delegation on the objectives and mission of the Press Council, said a press release.

Fayaz Mahmood, President of the Islamabad High Court Journalists Association, congratulated the Chairman on his appointment and highlighted the challenges faced by journalists.

## River Kabul still runs in low flood: FFC

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Federal Flood Commission (FFC) has said that river Kabul continues to flow in low flood at Warsak-Nowsheera reach while all other major rivers Indus, Jhelum, Chenab, Ravi and Sutlej run normal.

According to daily FFC report on Sunday, the current combined live storage of the country's major reservoirs including Tarbela, Mangla and Chashma stood at 8.374 million feet of water (MAF) which is 62.86 per cent of the total 13.321 MAF.

According to Flood Forecasting Division (FFD) Lahore, yesterday's (7th) Westerly Wave over Kashmir and adjoining areas has moved away Eastwards and a fresh trough of Westerly Wave lies over northern parts of Afghanistan. Weak moisture from Arabian Sea is penetrating and converging directionally over Southern Punjab and adjoining areas upto 3000 feet, while moisture from Bay of Bengal is still cut off however it is likely to revive from tomorrow.



ISLAMABAD: Labourers busy in construction work of flyover at under construction 10th Avenue during development work in Federal Capital.

## Islamabad traffic police; stretched thin amid growing challenges

ISLAMABAD (APP): As Islamabad's population has surged by 107.49% since 2006, the Islamabad Traffic Police (ITP) is grappling with the pressure of an escalating number of vehicles and increasing daily traffic.

Despite the city's rapid growth, the ITP continues to operate with the same resources allocated nearly two decades ago, when it was first established.

Established in 2006 with ample resources, the ITP has played a crucial role in maintaining traffic flow, enforcing laws, and educating the public about road safety.

However, the exponential increase in registered vehicles by 775.68% and daily traffic volume by 107.49% has highlighted the urgent need for additional resources and support.

The ITP's responsibilities are diverse and demanding, managing extraordinary movements daily while ensuring normal traffic flow.

It is providing escorts for dignitaries, including foreign and provincial delegations.

Similarly, overseeing permanent parking in the Red Zone and various public spaces is its responsibilities.

Placing diversions during rallies, sit-ins, and national events, devising alternative routes, easing traffic congestion during rush hours with a dedicated unit also comes in its jurisdiction.

It was mandated from conducting educational programs in institutions and public spaces via the ITP Education Wing and disseminating traffic rule information and updates through ITP FM 92.4 and public relations.

The ITP offers mandatory classes for repeat or serious traffic violators.

It conducts routine and special enforcement campaigns, including the "ITP Highway Patrol" and "ITP Night Patrol."

It also provides licensing facilities at various points, including mobile services for institutions and commercial areas.

Offering help through "ITP Mechanic on Wheels" for vehicle breakdowns, besides assisting Safe City in electronic challan issuance and enforcement.

Despite their commendable efforts, the ITP's current workforce of 685 officers and 207 vehicles/motorcycles, sanctioned in 2006, is proving insufficient for today's demands.

The pending proposal for 2,616 new posts and 499 additional vehicles/motorcycles, initiated in 2021, underscores the pressing need for resource expansion.

Furthermore, advancements in traffic engineering and technological innovations could significantly enhance traffic management and safety in the Capital.

As Islamabad continues to grow, bolstering the ITP with adequate resources is imperative to maintain order and ensure the safety of road users.

The ITP's dedication and professionalism have set a high standard, but without the necessary support, sustaining this level of service may become increasingly challenging.



ISLAMABAD: Police personals stands alert at Islamabad Expressway in the Federal Capital during Tehreek-e-Labbai Pakistan (TLP) sit-in protest (Dharna) at Faizabad flyover.

## MoHR to start mechanism of certificate for PWDs

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Ministry of Human Rights (MoHR) moved to digitalise the disability certificate issuance mechanism for Persons with Disabilities (PWDs). This initiative aimed to streamline the process, reduce delays, and enhance accessibility.

A high-level meeting was held to discuss this initiative, attended by representatives from the Ministry of National Health Services, Regulations and Coordination, PIMS, Poly-clinic, NIRM, Chairman Medical Assessment Board Dr. Faridullah Zimri, and ED SPRC.

Key decisions made during the meeting included developing an online application and tracking system to facilitate easier access and progress monitoring for applicants. Digital certificates will be issued to replace traditional physical copies, enhancing efficiency and security. NADRA's database will be integrated for seamless verification, ensuring the authenticity of the information provided, said a press release issued here on Thursday.

Collaboration among stakeholders from the healthcare, social welfare, and IT sectors was emphasized to ensure the successful implementation of the digital system. This joint effort aims to create a more inclusive and supportive environment for PWDs in Pakistan.

Federal Secretary for Human Rights, Allah Dino Khawaja stated, "This initiative will facilitate PWDs, ensuring their rights and dignity are respected. This digitization effort promises to bring convenience, efficiency, and empowerment to PWDs, aligning with the Ministry's commitment to inclusive development."

The Ministry of Human Rights remains dedicated to advancing policies and initiatives that promote the well-being and rights of all citizens, particularly Persons with Disabilities.



ISLAMABAD: A foreigner woman keenly looking at a monkey sitting under a plant as people visit famous picnic point Daman-e-Koh to spend their holiday.

## 'Emerging Technologies Centers' to be established at 350 schools soon

ISLAMABAD (APP): In a bid to transform Pakistan into a global IT hub, the Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training is all set to launch a landmark project aimed at equipping school children with cutting-edge skills in emerging technologies.

According to the Ministry of Education and Professional Training, the project will establish "Emerging Technology Centres" in 350 schools across Islamabad, Azad Jammu and Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan.

The initiative is part of the government's strategic planning to strengthen its initiative to make Pakistan a global IT destination.

The centres will serve as catalyst for introducing children to emerging technologies such as virtual reality, artificial intelligence, and data analytics, preparing them for the increasingly digital landscape they will encounter in their future endeavors. The project is aimed at developing skills and capacity in the IT sector, preparing students for a digital future, enhancing Pakistan's export and capability in the IT sector, and making Pakistan a global IT destination. The Emerging Technology Centres will be divided into two facilities - Class A and Class B. Class A facilities will provide state-of-the-art.

## IHC serves notices to CDA, PIC on journalist's plot case

ISLAMABAD (APP): A division bench of Islamabad High Court (IHC) has served notices to Chairman Capital Development Authority (CDA) and Pakistan Information Commission (PIC) in a case seeking issuance of a plot's no demand certificate (NDC).

A two-judge bench comprising Justice Miangul Hassan Aurangzeb and Justice Arbab Muhammad Tahir heard the intra court appeal filed by a journalist Ilyas Bhatti.

The court in its order said that it appears that a civil suit has been filed by affectedees from whom the land of the said plot was acquired by the CDA for payment of compensation. In the said civil suit, an injunctive order has been issued. The writ petition filed by the appellant was dismissed on the sole ground that a civil suit regarding the same plot is already pending adjudication.

The court said that the petitioner is a senior citizen and it is imperative that the said civil suit ought to be decided at the earliest. The petitioner submits that when he purchased the plot, he had no knowledge of any litigation pending before any court in respect of the plot. The petitioner here also named CDA's Additional Director Estate Affectedees sector G-7 as respondent in the case.

The further hearing of the case was then adjourned till October 22.



ISLAMABAD: Youngsters jumping and bathing in a water pond near Rawal Dam to get some relief from hot weather in the Federal Capital.

## Islamabad pioneers Climate Change Fund to combat environmental degradation

ISLAMABAD (APP): In a landmark move, the Capital Development Authority (CDA) has established a "Carbon Credit Program" that plans to plant 4 to 5 million trees across 2000-10,000 kanals aimed at mitigating the impacts of climate change in the Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT).

This initiative, driven by Federal Minister for Interior Mohsin Naqvi, marks a significant step towards addressing environmental concerns in the region.

Commending the efforts, Interior Minister Naqvi praised CDA Chairman Muhammad Ali Randhawa and his team for their proactive approach. "The CDA team deserves accolades for this initiative," he stated.

As part of the Climate Change Initiative, the CDA is launching a "Carbon Credit Program" that plans to plant 4 to 5 million trees across 2000-10,000 kanals in the city.

Chairman Randhawa highlighted that new sectors, avenues, and other open spaces have been designated for this extensive tree plantation drive.

In addition to the Climate Change Fund, the CDA has also approved the "Margalla Hills Fund," which will allocate 1.5 per cent of revenue generated from recreational spots in Margalla Hills towards their protection and beautification.

## Service application ZARRA handled more than 3000 cases so far

ISLAMABAD (APP): Zainab Alert Response and Recovery database (ZARRA) has handled a total of 3,639 cases successfully since it was launched.

According to DG ZARRA, out of these cases, significant progress has been made with 2,130 successful closures, resulting in either the recovery of missing children or the resolution of the reported issue.

There are still 592 ongoing cases that require continued efforts, according to data revealed by Ministry of Human Rights.

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